



# *The Insider*

[www.senate.mi.gov/switalski](http://www.senate.mi.gov/switalski)

## **Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10**

**February 6, 2004**

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and for giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing, while keeping true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at [senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov) or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a library near you. Call my office and make an appointment, or you can just walk in. See page 4 for the schedule.

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### **Quick Tax Tips**

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With tax day just around the corner, avoid the last minute stress and hustle and bustle by e-filing your tax returns. Due to budget cuts and staffing shortages, the Michigan Department of Treasury is urging residents to file their taxes over the Internet at [www.michigan.gov/treasury](http://www.michigan.gov/treasury). The website provides a convenient and quicker method to file your taxes and also provides valuable information.

On average, e-filing can take up to 14 days whereas it could take up to 16 weeks if you file your return by mail.

The Michigan Department of Treasury provides a Customer Contact toll-free number for Michigan residents that are in need any assistance or wish to check the status of their refund. The number is 1-800-827-4000. The Treasury Department requests that citizens be patient when calling the toll-free number.

Michigan taxpayers can also order tax forms by calling the department's Order Tax Forms toll-free number at 1-800-367-6263. You can also pick up some tax forms at your local library.

The Michigan Department of Treasury also advised taxpayers that the MI-1040EZ Income Tax Easy Return and TeleFile Program have been eliminated for the 2003 tax year. In addition, the Elder Prescription Insurance Coverage's Prescription Drug Credit (MI-1040CR-9) is no longer available. For further information, citizens are urged to call 1-866-747-5844.

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## Supreme Court Reform

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### *Senate Joint Resolution G*

I introduced a resolution (SJR G) this week in the Michigan Senate that would reform how Michigan's Supreme Court judicial positions are filled. My resolution would end the current method of electing Supreme Court Judges. Instead, my resolution calls for the governor to appoint Michigan Supreme Court Justices, subject to confirmation by two-thirds of the Senate. The two-thirds requirement would reduce partisanship and ensure moderate judges acceptable to majority and minority parties in the legislature.

If the resolution passes the Senate, the House and is signed by the governor, the proposal would be placed on the November ballot as a constitutional amendment.

Currently, candidates for the Supreme Court for Michigan are *nominated by the political parties*. These candidates then appear on the ballot on a *nonpartisan* basis. Although they must then run for election, these candidates are hardly household names. Justices generally keep a relatively low public profile during their careers, and avoid taking public positions on issues which might disqualify them from someday hearing a case without some assumed prejudice.

The current process of electing Supreme Court justices has significant drawbacks. Recent campaigns have featured partisan politics, big money, and negative campaigns that are corrosive to our justice system. The nonpartisan Michigan Campaign Finance Network in a report entitled *Special Interests v. Public Values: Funding Michigan Supreme Court Campaigns: 1994-2000*, estimated that the major party candidates spent on average of \$1.14 million each in 2000. As many people remember, this money was used to run negative ads that often distorted other candidate's voting record and views. For the majority of voters, these negative ads are all the information they have to go on.

Although the current system is built around election, in practice nearly half of the Justices are already appointed to the Court to fill vacancies. Appointment would not be that big of a departure from current practice. Another problem is that of voter turnout. Voter participation drops when voters get to the nonpartisan portion of the ballot.

Those in favor of voters electing judges argue that judges are thereby held accountable to the electorate. However, when the electorate knows very little about a particular candidate, often times they vote because of a familiar name, or a ballot designation, or an ad they saw on television. Political campaign skills are markedly different from the talents we hope judges will exercise on the bench of the Supreme Court. Are elections really the best way of ensuring judicial excellence?

My resolution would introduce checks and balances in the filling of Supreme Court judicial positions. The governor will appoint a judicial candidate, subject to confirmation by two-thirds of the Senate. Combined with longer terms, such an arrangement would increase judicial independence and reduce the partisanship than has characterized the current system of selection.

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## Letters to Mickey

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Dear Coach Switalski:

Your newsletter is for the birds. How dare you to compare yourself to a man who has dedicated all his life to mold kids into men?

People like you that think you are a Joe Paterno are all over this country. A few years ago I wonder if you knew the difference between a soccer ball and a basketball. Stick to politics...you are good...very good at it. Again, you will never be a Joe Paterno. Good luck.

*You are correct on both points. My YellowSnakes were 0-10, so even Paterno had a better year than me. And my newsletter is useful. It's printed on highly absorbent recycled paper which many of my constituents use to line their bird cages.*

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Dear Senator Switalski,

I would like you to know how much the interest and attention you have given to our request for the fixing of Nunnely Road has meant to us, the congregation of Unity East Church, myself personally and Reverend Elmer Schmidt. We really appreciate your coming to the church in person to talk with Reverend Elmer Schmidt. That was more than we could have asked for.

We also appreciate that you have a full and busy agenda, but still found the time for us. We all thank you again.

God Bless,  
Sylvia Tobará

*I am glad you and your friends came to my district office hours and told me about your problems. Mayor Notte and I visited the church in a big black Lincoln one morning recently in our dark suits and overcoats. Everyone thought we were the FBI.  
Thanks for your kind words.*

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## Mickey's TV Insider Show

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Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns in our district. My future guests will include Sterling Heights Mayor Richard Notte, Utica Mayor Jackie Noonan, and U.S. Representative Candice Miller (R-Harrison Township).

### **Sterling Heights**

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Utica**

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

**Clinton Township**

Various times/Check local TV listings  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

**Roseville**

check local TV listings  
(Unavailable at press time)

\*Please note that Sterling Heights/Utica/Clinton Township will show the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 5 and Wide Open West Channel 10. Roseville residents are urged to check their local television listings for dates, times and channels.

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**Coffee Hours**

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\*Please note that since the District Office is in Roseville I do not have coffee hours in Roseville. I encourage you to visit the Roseville office. We even have a coffee pot.

**Sterling Heights/Utica**

**Feb. 9, Mar. 1**  
**7-9 P.M.**

Location: Sterling Heights Library  
(Utica and Dodge Park roads)

**Clinton Township**

**Feb. 23, Mar. 29**  
**7-9 P.M.**

Location: Clinton Township Library  
(35891 Gratiot and 15 mile)

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**Contact My Office**

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**Website:** <http://www.senate.mi.gov/switalski>

**Email:** [senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov)

**Lansing Office**

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